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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

MONDAY, MAY 10, 1943

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SUBJECT: "THICK AND THIN." Information from plant scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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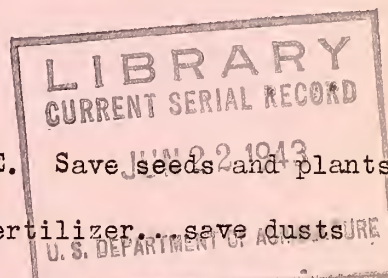
The watchword of the Victory Gardener is: SAVE. Save seeds and plants... save space, especially in the small garden...save fertilizer...save dusts and sprays...save tools...save time and labor. Use everything to best advantage. Make a little go a long way. Get the most out of what you have. Avoid waste...carelessness...neglect.

All Victory Gardeners believe in this advice. But not all know how to put it to practice. Much waste comes just because gardeners don't know the little secrets of saving. So here are a few of the secrets of saving seeds, plants and space, as told by plant scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Much waste in the garden comes from sowing seed too thick. This makes for waste all around--waste of seed to begin with...waste of time and labor...waste of plants in thinning because some don't transplant successfully...or waste of plants left crowded in rows so they can't grow well and yield best quality vegetables.

An old gardener's rhyme goes like this: "Don't make your plants come crowding up...As thick as hair upon a pup...Your seeds, be careful how you place them...And take a little pains to space them."

In spacing beans and peas take a good deal of pains, plant scientists advise. Peas and beans should go in the ground as the plants are to stand. Peas need to stand a foot apart in the rows and have 18 inches between rows.



Pole lima beans and pole snap beans need at least 2 feet of space both ways -- more if you want room to walk between rows to gather beans. No matter how tempted you are to put beans or peas close, don't do it. You can't transplant them successfully later. And thinning the rows and throwing away young plants is not only a waste but also disturbs the roots of the plants left. But if your peas and beans do come up too thick, you must thin if any are to develop properly and give you good crops. And if you must thin, do it early while plants are small so you will disturb the roots of plants left as little as possible.

The seeds of beet and chard also should go in with plenty of space, but for a different reason. Each "seed" of beet and chard is really a package of several seeds. So several plants will come up from each one, and you are sure to have to do some thinning. But don't plant so that you have to do any more thinning than necessary. Plant beets 2 to 3 inches apart, and give them 14 inches between rows. Chard needs more room. Plant chard 4 to 6 inches apart in the row with 18 inches between rows. You can often use the thinnings of greens like chard and beets. The young leaves you pull out are delicious to eat. Use the first thinnings of beets as greens...later thinnings as baby beets cooked with greens. The rule for wise thinning holds for beets and chards as for all other vegetables. That rule is: Don't wait too long to thin. Don't put off thinning until overcrowding has damaged all the plants.

The situation with small seeds like the seeds of carrots, parsnips, spinach, collards, lettuce and turnips is different. You can hardly help putting them in thick, and plant scientists say it is all right to plant them 3 or 4 times as thick as they are to stand. So many fail to come up as good plants. Thin out the weak ones before the plants crowd each other.

And use the thinnings at the dinner table as much as possible. Tender young leaves of spinach, collards, turnips and lettuce are delicious. Tiny finger carrots are fine, too---just washed and boiled a few minutes. Very often you can transplant these vegetables when the plants are small and save them that way.

You can fill in between the rows of slow-growing crops with the transplanted seedlings of lettuce and radishes, for example. The fast-growing vegetables will be up and out before the slow-growing crops on either side need the space. Another way to save space is to fill in vacant spots in rows with transplants from overcrowded rows. This may not make the rows look so neat and uniform, but in wartime Victory Gardens economy counts rather than looks.

Now a few tips to help you transplant successfully. To begin with, you should know that transplanting in itself does not "do the plant good," as many people believe. Transplanting is a strain on the plant and slows up growth until the plant recovers. So in transplanting do everything you can to ease the strain. Keep the roots from drying out in every way possible. Soak the ground around the plant before you move it. And have moist soil for the plant to go in. Move plants as quickly as possible. Don't let them lie out and wait with their roots exposed. Evening is a good time to transplant because plants can recover somewhat in the cool of the night before they have to endure the heat of the sun. Give plants shade for the first few days after transplanting. Set fruit baskets over them...or paper...or place boards or shingles on the sunny side--any sort of cover that allows the plant air and shade at the same time. Lettuce especially needs shade after transplanting.

In transplanting set most vegetable plants a little deeper than they grew before. For example, set cabbages in the ground to their first leaves. And firm the soil around the plants after transplanting to bring it close to the roots and keep out air pockets. Water after planting and firming the soil.

"Your seeds, be careful how you place them"...yes, but if you didn't place them just right, save them by careful transplanting.

